**Textbook 1:** United States History

Pearson Prentice Hall; Copyright 2008

Authors: Emma Lapsansky-Werner; Randy Roberts; Peter B. Levy; Alan Taylor

Senior Consultants: John R. Chavez, Herman Viola

Description:

This book is designed to give a survey of American History from Columbus’ voyage to America and continues to the Presidency of George W. Bush. Though it does briefly mention the “Columbian exchange”, the book only gives a cursory treatment to the first century and a half of the British colonial experience in North America, charging ahead to the American Revolution. The book is intended for high school students and provides a wide variety of sources both textual and visual. Instructors using the Teacher’s Edition also have the option of using primary source audio clips so that students can hear various historical speeches or personal histories. The audio clips can also be found along with other supplemental materials on the companion website to the textbook.

Organization:

This expansive volume weighs in at over 900 pages (counting references, appendices and indexes). It is divided into seven major chronological eras, some of which overlap. For example, “World War II and Postwar America” covers 1931-1960, while the next era “Challenges and Change” covers 1945-1980. These eras range in length from two to five chapters. Each chapter could easily be a unit of instruction. For example, a class could spend weeks just on the information provided in Chapter 20 “The Vietnam Era (1954-1975)” alone. Each chapter is further sub-divided into three to five sections that explore some aspect of the chapter’s theme (i.e., ‘Origins of the Vietnam War’, ‘The War Divides America’). Most chapters also include a section called the ‘American Issues Connector’ which highlights one of the major issues that is a dominant theme of the Chapter. These range from ‘Interaction with the Environment’ to ‘Civil Liberties and National Security’. At the end of the book are various appendixes that include profiles of each of the fifty states, a list of Presidents of the United States, a primer on key economic issues, landmark decisions of the Supreme Court, and a compilation of key primary source documents from the Mayflower Compact, to the Gettysburg Address, to George W. Bush’s War on Terror Speech. Interspersed throughout each page are sidebars about notable figures, notable or illuminating photos, political cartoons, graphs, charts, maps, and infographics. The book pays a great deal of attention to literacy, including key vocabulary terms in the margins, an English-Spanish glossary in the back of the book, and lots of visuals. However, the extensive and superfluous use of graphics and visuals can become distracting at times. When I first examined this book I found it hard to read because I felt my eye being pulled in many directions. I would imagine that a high school student, particularly one with ADHD, would find the overuse of visuals to be distracting. Also, this book attempts to cover a broad range of history, but in places the coverage does not have the depth that I believe that it could.

**Textbook 2:** The American Pageant, Thirteenth Edition (AP Edition)

Houghton Mifflin, Copyright 2006

Authors: David M. Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, Thomas A. Bailey

Description:

*The American Pageant* is a long-standing favorite in the textbook universe. Though its language can be somewhat advanced for average high school students, its prose comes across as more literary than many other instructional texts. It is defined by its efforts to convey American History in the form of a story. The book focuses on presenting a balanced picture of events throughout history and forcing students to think critically about events both within their historical context and as they relate to more contemporary affairs. There is an emphasis on providing historical “evidence”, encouraging students to review the information available not just to draw conclusions about the material, but also to begin to think about the historiography of the subject—how historians form the basis of their conclusions. The Advanced Placement edition of the book also includes a section that helps to prepare students for Document Based Questions that students will find on the Advanced Placement exam.

Organization:

This lengthy tome of almost 1,200 pages covers American history from the pre-Columbian period through the Presidential Election of 2004. It is divided into six overlapping “parts” that cover a wide span of history. For example, the entire twentieth century is covered in just two “parts”. Each part is divided into roughly seven chapters. Each chapter covers a chronological era and there is little overlap between the chapters. Chapters are quite long, but cover a vast amount of information. Topics are dealt with in a rather linear fashion that doesn’t meander far from a straight timeline. While there are a number of sections within each chapter, they are written as part of the chapter, not as standalone entities. There is not a faithful adherence to neutrality in the choice of language used at times. For example the section covering the Iran Hostage Crisis is titled “The Iranian Hostage Humiliation”. This book requires students to have a solid grasp of academic English. The material is dense at times, and the book does not attempt to sugarcoat it. Struggling readers will likely find themselves challenged. Although the vocabulary is tough in places, the writing style is more accessible than some other texts. The book does make use of a lot of visuals, however the use of these visuals is judicious and visually appealing. There is no writing in the margins and subtopics receive their own two-page spread rather than being incorporated into margins. The entire text of the United States Constitution appears at the end of the book along with a series of graphs, charts and maps showing trends in American history over time.

**Textbook 3:** Comparative Politics: responses to global challenges (6th edition)

Cengage learning, copyright 2009

Author: Charles Hauss

Description:

Comparative Politics is written in a narrative style that attempts to tell the stories of the individual countries political systems. The book is arranged thematically with countries grouped by economic development stats as well as structural characteristics. The book uses a systems model that it introduces in the first two chapters to evaluate the countries. The systems model has five basic elements: feedback, input, output, decision making and environment. The book contains chapters on 11 countries and the European Union with online chapters of a handful more. It also has introductory chapter at the beginning of each section devoted to the general problems faced by industrialized democracies, former communist states and developing countries. The book is not specifically dedicated to the AP comparative government class which only covers Great Britain, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, China and Iran.

Organization:

The book is fairly short at 500 pages of text and the writing style is dense, but not overly academic. The author attempts to write about each chapter in a narrative way. The prose is more similar to long form journalism or to a commercial non-fiction book than to a typical high school text book. I have heard students compare it favorably to their standard U.S. History textbook. The book is almost entirely text. For every pair pages there is usually one picture and one small box that usually has some kind of data table in it but also occasionally has key terms or a short aside. The large amount of text is broken down into very small segments of sections and sub sections which help keep it from becoming overwhelming.

**Strategy 2.1 Anticipation Guide**

Description: The Anticipation Guide is a worksheet that asks students to weigh the validity of a series of statements relating to a particular topic. Students read from a list of statements and place a checkmark next to the statements that they agree with or believe to be true. After this, students discuss their rationale with the entire class.

Rationale: This exercise activates students’ prior knowledge or beliefs about a subject before they sit down to read about it. It allows students to share their own beliefs and opinions as well as weigh other points of view before they further their own learning.

Example: American History—This assignment would be good to use regarding a contentious issue that students might know something about but not necessarily have a deep knowledge of. A good example would be on a text or historical novel relating to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. This example would offer the ability to consider the rationale for this violation of civil liberties as well as the arguments against. It might also be a good chance to compare and contrast with Nazi concentration camps in Europe.

**Strategy 2.3 Problematic Situation**

Description: Give students a prompt that outlines particularly difficult decisions that a person may have to make related to your topic. Have them break down the situation into specific problems that need to be addressed and then come up with possible solutions and outcomes.

Rational: It helps students to break down complex situation by analyzing the specific elements and the cause and affect relationships related to them. It also allows them to become more familiar with the tough decisions faced by people related to the topic.

Example: This will work great with both history and government. It is something I could have used in my mini-lesson on narco-corruption in Mexican politics. I would have had students assume the role of a low level Mexican government worker who was offered a bribe from one of the cartels in a region where more than one cartel was vying for power.

**Strategy 2.5 That Was Then…This Is Now**

Description: Students write a short summary and sketch a drawing of a given topic. This is performed before and after students read a text.

Rationale: This exercise allows students to let their creativity shine. It allows them to access multiple intelligences. It can also serve as a pre-assessment and post-assessment in order to determine student learning gains from a text.

Example: Geography—This could serve as an activity that could be employed before and after students studied a unit or lesson on a particular country or region. Students could demonstrate their initial impression of a place and compare it to what they learned as a result of their study.

**Strategy 2.6 Writing an Autobiography**

Description: Have the students write an autobiographical account of one feature of their life.

Rational: Besides practice and at writing an autobiography can really work to help make the topic relevant to the students helping them to engage with the material.

Example: Rather than pure autobiography it may be useful to have the students write a family history especially as it relates to a large historical event like WWII. Another option would be to have students write an autobiography of people or places they have experienced for a geography class.

**Strategy 2.7 Opinionnaire/Questionnaire**

Description: Students are asked to interview their classmates with a questionnaire that the teacher creates relating to a unit of study. Students question each other to find out what they really believe about a topic.

Rationale: This exercise helps students to focus their attention on how they feel about a given topic. It also gives students a chance to express themselves to their classmates and helps get them moving and learning from each other.

Example: Government—This could be used as part of a unit on the Political Spectrum. The Questionnaire could be a series of statements on economic or social issues. It could even be used in concert with a self-quiz that helps identify for students how “liberal” or “conservative” their belief system is.

**Strategy 2.8 Silent Sustained Reading**

Description: Provide time for students to engage in self selected reading. Have students spend a few minutes writing in a reading journal bout what they have read.

Rationale: One of the best ways to improve your reading skills is to read more. By allowing students free time to read by providing free choice within a subject are kids will be more likely to engage and retain material.

Examples: In a history class, the teacher could create a collection of appropriate level historical novels and non-fiction works and historical magazines to allow students to read during SSR time. Materials could also be brought from home if Germaine to the class subject. The students could write in daily reading journals and then create a summary of the book at the end.

**Strategy 2.13 Content Predict-O-Gram**

Description: This exercise is an adaptation of the Predict-O-Gram. It is designed to emphasize content instead of narrative and therefore is likely to be more useful to social studies instructors. Students are introduced to key terms from a unit and then asked to predict which one of several categories that term would most likely belong in.

Rationale: This helps increase student literacy because the teacher reads the vocabulary terms aloud first so that students can hear the proper pronunciation of the words before they read them. This can help students pick up words that they might have heard but have odd spellings. Students are encouraged to think critically about the terms in order to discover where they should be properly classified. This may subconsciously get students to think about the roots of words or the context of the terms.

Example: Government—This could be helpful in any unit in which different terms could be classified into different categories. One example would be on a unit that compares different forms of government. For example, students would have to determine that a word like “election” would go under the category “Democracy”; the term “proletariat” would go with the category “Communism”, etc.

**Strategy 2.15 K-W-L**

Description: Know-Write-Learn is a strategy where students identify the things they already know, the thing they want to know and the after the fact what the learned. This activity helps students access their prior knowledge as well as anticipate the content and then review.

Rationale: K-W-L touches on three of the important strategies for literacy enhancement, accessing prior knowledge, anticipating, and reviewing. It also allows the teacher to survey student interests and adjust the curriculum accordingly. The K part of the activity can also serve as a pre-assessment of student knowledge.

Example: In comparative politics class before beginning a new country, particularly one where some student may have significantly more knowledge than other students, a KWL would let the instructor know which students may be used as resources and what content may be extraneous.

**Strategy 2.17 Draw, Read, Attend, Write (DRAW)**

Description: A teacher prepares a list of questions relating to a text or passage, and then cuts it into strips with individual questions. Students randomly draw questions, and then read the text searching for the answer to their question. After the entire class has read the text, the teacher will ask the prepared questions. Each respective group will answer the question for the class. When all questions are asked, students write a short reflection or take a quiz on the material.

Rationale: This exercise forces students to actively read the text searching for the answer for their own question. It has the benefit of allowing students to teach each other the material and can be a respite from teacher-driven lecturing.

Example: American History—This could be used for any text that is short enough to read within a class period that contains a lot of expository information that might be difficult for some students to fully retain. One example would be a lesson relating to a single Indian tribe (Comanche, Nez Perce, etc.) or group of Indians (Plains, Northwest Coast, etc.) Often, lessons on an individual tribe contain a lot of details. Having students specifically look for one section and then teaching it to the rest of the class will reinforce the material that was just read.

**Strategy 3.2 Exclusion Brainstorming**

Description: Students are asked to look at a list of terms that are not necessarily all related to a particular lesson. From that list, students must decide if the terms are related, unrelated, or ambiguous. Then students read the material to find the terms.

Rationale: This helps students to learn to disregard information that is not relevant to a given topic or theme. This exercise also works for students of multiple literacy levels.

Example: Economics—This type of an exercise could be used to help separate out terms that are non-applicable to a topic. A good example would be the terms Microeconomics or Macroeconomics. Students would have to look at a list of terms and decide whether they fit into that category.

**Strategy 3.3 Imagine That!**

Description: The ‘imagine that!’ exercise requires students to consider alternate personal perspectives by writing from a different point of view. The student can either be given a long answer question or several shorter questions.

Rationale: By putting themselves in someone else’s shoes students are personalizing the content and are more likely to contain it. By using a different voice in their writing students will be better able to distinguish narrative voice when they read.

Example: A classic social studies example of the Imagine that!, is to write a letter to the editor as a person in a different historical period. In my lesson plan on segregation I had students write a letter to the editor as a an African American veteran who had just returned home from fighting fascism to find his rights as an American limited by his skin color.

**Strategy 3.10 Word Sort**

Description: Word sort involves student sorting important content words into different categories. The activity can either be done closed, with the categories provided or open with the students creating their own categories. It can also be done in small groups. The word sort can take place before the reading in order to help students activate prior knowledge or it can be used after words for review and better understanding of the concepts.

Rationale: By categorizing and sorting important words students need to think about not only the words, but how the words relate to each other and the content. With open words sorts the students are able to categorize the words in way that are meaningful to them while in a closed words ort student are able to better understand key topics.

Example: In a history on the pre Columbian native Americans the teacher could provide adjectives that described different Mesoamerican societies with Aztec, Inca and Mayan as categories. Some of the words could be included in more than one category while others are exclusive. This would force student to think about the similarities and differences of these societies.

**Strategy 4.5 Prediction, Definitions and Connections**

Description: The student identifies an unfamiliar word and writes down the word and the sentence in which it is used. The student then predicts three possible definitions of the word before looking up the definition and writing that down. The student then writes one or two sentences connecting the word to the subject matter and another sentence connecting it to something personal.

Rationale: By having students predict the definition of unknown words and then us them in sentences both related to the content as well as to personal narrative it significantly increase the chance that students will retain new vocabulary. It also provides an opportunity for the student to interact with the subject way in a way that they are more likely to retain.

Example: For a unit on the constitution I am having students read Washington’s farewell address there are a few antiquated words that the students are unlikely to understand. They are however likely to be able to gain the meaning from context and use them in a sentence to better help them understand the material.

**Strategy 4.15 Glossary**

Description: The glossary of a text is an important resource where the student can find definitions to important words. It is important to point out the texts glossary as well as any formatting the text uses to distinguish words that may appear in the glossary, such as bolding.

Rationale: It is important for students to be able to find words that they might not understand quickly and with definitions that are relevant to the subject matter. While glossaries may not be the best means for retaining new vocabulary they allow the student to read relatively uninterrupted allowing them to better grasp the content.

Example: Teachers can encourage students to use the glossary by using vocabulary and key words found in the texts glossary.

**Strategy 5.2 Anticipation guide**

Description: An anticipation guide is essential an initial assessment that is designed to focus students on what may be coming in the readings. The activity is structured as a multiple choice questions that are structured to present a survey of important events that you want students to understand and that relate to the students personal experiences.

Rationale: The anticipation guide works to focus students on the ideas that will be presented by the reading so that they better able to engage with the material. The real benefit of the anticipation guide however is that after the reading students can compare what they read with what they anticipated.

Example: The anticipation guide can be used to great effect in a history class whenever you were dealing with material that runs contrary to commonly perceived versions of history. The mythology surrounding Christopher Columbus would be a great example of how to use the anticipation guide in a history class.

**Strategy 5.9 What’s your perspective?**

Description: What’s your perspective? Is the opposite of the Imagine That! exercise. Instead of creating perspective from what you know about someone’s situation, you are taking something a perspective and trying to figure out their situation. Students try and decipher the text to determine the author’s needs, concerns, events that have impacted their life and how they feel. The students are also asked to summarize the author’s situation.

Rationale: This exercise helps students to break down a reading critically and think about how the authors voice is related to his environment. It also causes to students to look more carefully at a text to try and pick up the subtle clues that provide the rich understanding of the text.

Example: For history classes these techniques could provide a useful tool to helping students unlock primary sources. Particularly those written by unofficial authors like personal correspondence or opinion pieces.

**Strategy 5.11 Connecting Fact and Historical Fiction**

Description: This strategy uses historical fiction to introduce students to material at the same time that they are studying the same era or event in their text. The worksheet allows students to draw connections between the two and single out claims that are not confirmed by the text.

Rationale: This allows students to use a narrative medium that they might find more interesting that reading from an instructional text. Students will experience aesthetic and efferent reading at the same time. This also provides an opportunity for cross-departmental collaboration.

Example: American History—This strategy would work with any appropriate work of historical fiction that covers a topic that students will learn about. A good example would be studying Arthur Miller’s “The Crucible” in concert with a unit on the Salem Witch Trials.

**Strategy 6.4 Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text (GIST)**

Description: Students are given a short text consisting of several short paragraphs. Then they are asked to collaborate with each other to refine the paragraphs into short, concise summaries that eliminate unnecessary words.

Rationale: This activity helps students to find the major points of a text. By learning to cut through the clutter, students learn how to navigate through complex texts and seek out the main idea or intent.

Example: Government—Helping students cut out superfluous language is helpful when studying government documents. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent when studying the United States Constitution. This strategy could help students narrow down some of the more complicated Articles to solely the main points. It could be a group assignment that would create a “classroom edition” of the Constitution that could be referred to occasionally.

**Strategy 6.17 Intra-Act**

Description: Students read a text on a controversial issue. Then they are divided into groups and asked to come up with opinion questions for the class to answer. Students then take those questions and create a chart with all group members’ names. Each student responds to the questions and predicts how others in the group will respond. Groups will compare their responses and then share with the whole class. When the exercise is completed, students will write an essay about what they’ve learned.

Rationale: This type of activity has multiple benefits for students. It helps them to refine their own conclusions about controversial topics. It forces them to take positions and then defend them with other students. This type of emotional attachment increases student engagement with the subject. Finally, students further refine their ideas about the subject by writing a reflection about what they’ve learned.

Example: American History—This could be helpful for a unit that could be considered emotionally charged that raises many issues. One example would be a unit on the Presidential Election of 2000. Students could be asked to state their opinions relating to related topics like the Electoral College, third parties, fairness of recount standards, appropriateness of Supreme Court intervention, etc.

**Strategy 6.21 Timeline**

Description: Students study a timeline of events for a specific period of time, and then answer a series of questions taken from the timeline. Students then create a personal timeline of their own history. This could be well-defined or open-ended depending on teacher preference. You could limit their experience to a timeline since the beginning of their high school years (especially with older students) or you could allow students to decide how far back they would like to go.

Rationale: This type of activity teaches students to view history as a series of events much like their own life. It helps students internalize how changes over time lead to our present reality. This can act as a visual aid for more visual learners. It can also be used to tie unit together that might normally be taught separately.

Example: American History—A good example of concurrent events that are usually taught as separate units is the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement. Students can get a sense of the twin challenges that faced President Johnson. Using a timeline is a good way to teach how there can be considerable overlap between different topics.